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SECONDARY AND HIGHER  
EDUCATION IN THE SOUTH  
FOR  
WHITES AND NEGROES

By  
DR. HORACE BUMSTEAD



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# SECONDARY AND HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE SOUTH

## FOR WHITES AND NEGROES

BY DR. HORACE BUMSTEAD

The special task of the present paper is to present a comparative view of what is being done for the two races in the South in the way of Secondary and Higher Education. The facts presented will be drawn chiefly from the latest report of the United States Commissioner of Education, giving the statistics for the year ending July, 1909. These statistics are doubtless at some points incomplete and inaccurate, and sometimes they appear inconsistent with one another. Yet, in spite of these deficiencies, the total impression which they make cannot be very far from the truth.

The field of enquiry covers the former sixteen Slave States and the District of Columbia; but in a few of the tables quoted there are included figures from two or three of the Northern States where separate schools for Negroes are maintained, as at the South.

In studying the comparisons presented, it should be borne in mind that, roughly speaking, the population of the territory covered is approximately two white persons to one colored. If the two races were in an equally favorable economic condition, so that the Negroes could, equally with the whites, afford the expense of time and money in giving their children the advantages of an education beyond the elementary branches, we should expect to find a fully proportionate provision made for their Secondary and Higher Education. It is here, however, that we find the only consideration which can justify any disproportion of opportunity; and it can do this only temporarily. For the time has passed for anyone to seriously question the ability of Negro youth to acquire and use profitably the advanced education. Moreover, it is the part of wisdom, as well as of justice, for the State and the benevolent public to anticipate, rather than wait for, the improvement of the Negro's economic condition, in offering opportunities for the higher studies; for, by doing so, the present inequality, a source of many evils to the community, will be more quickly removed, and the latent and undeveloped productive power of the Negroes be the sooner utilized for the prosperity of the State.

While, then, we frankly concede that *some* disparity of opportunity is for the present inevitable, and perhaps excusable, it is well for us to ask, as we study the figures, whether the disparity which we shall discover is not very much greater than can be justified on any reasonable ground.

## PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS

We will consider, first, the provision made for the public high school training of whites and Negroes in the South. According to the report of the United States Commissioner of Education there were in the South last year attending public high schools, 142,837 white youth and 6,443 colored. In other words, while there are only twice as many white people as Negroes in the South, there were more than twenty-two times as many white youth in public high schools.

As to the number of public high schools, the whites have 2,088 and the blacks 112, or the whites more than eighteen times as many as the blacks.

## PRIVATE HIGH SCHOOLS

Let us now turn to the private high schools for the two races, as reported by the United States Commissioner. He tells us that in these private schools there are 27,539 white pupils and 3,105 colored, or nearly nine times as many white as colored. It will be noticed that the disparity here, while great, is not so great as in the case of the public high schools, and this fact is not without its significance. For it means that the colored people are actually paying for the Secondary Education of their children in private schools in a larger proportion, numerically, than are the white people. And this is confirmed by a further examination of the figures which have already been given. For we find that of the total number of white children receiving Secondary Education in the South, only sixteen per cent. are receiving it in private schools, while of the total number of black children receiving such education, thirty-two per cent. are receiving it in private schools—or twice as large a proportion as among the whites. This can only mean one or both of two things: either that the public school provision for the Secondary Education of Negro children is inadequate to the demand for such education, or else that the provision made is so inferior that the Negro parents prefer to pay for the better provision offered to them by the private schools. Both of these explanations are doubtless true.

## PUBLIC AND PRIVATE COLLEGES

Passing on to consider the collegiate education of white and colored youth as supported by public funds, we have to remember that the only

public institutions doing this work are the State Universities and Technical Schools and the Agricultural and Mechanical Colleges, the latter being largely maintained by funds from the United States Government. The number of white students receiving collegiate training in these institutions is reported as 16,086, and the number of colored as 974, i. e., the whites have more than sixteen times as many as the colored. But even these figures do not tell the whole story. For, of the sixteen colored institutions named, four report no collegiate students whatever, while three others report only two, five, and ten respectively. It is a well known fact that collegiate studies are not encouraged in the Negro State institutions of the South, and in one or more of them they have been discontinued after having once been introduced.

It is, then, to the private institution that we must look for whatever effective work has been done for the collegiate education of Negroes. Here, again, when we make a comparison with the white colleges, we find conditions similar to those which characterized the Secondary Education. For, while the Negroes had 3,211 collegiate students in their private institutions, the whites had 29,840, or more than nine times as many. And, on the other hand, while of the total number of white collegiate students, 65 per cent. were being educated in private institutions, and 35 per cent. in public ones, of colored collegiate students, nearly 77 per cent. were being educated in private institutions and only about 23 per cent. in public ones. Thus it appears that the poorer race is willing to pay, or has to pay, or both, in larger proportion than the richer race, for the private instruction of its youth beyond the elementary grades, in both secondary and collegiate branches.

## INDUSTRIAL AND AGRICULTURAL TRAINING

Thus far we have considered the matter of general education in secondary and higher studies. Let us now enquire what is being done in the South for the industrial and agricultural training of the two races. There are no statistics of such work in the elementary schools, and probably very little is being done except in a few isolated localities. We turn, then, to the reports of public high schools, of which fifty-five in the Southern States are reported as having 6,707 students in manual or technical training courses. Only two of these schools are colored, one in Kansas City, Mo., which is more a Western than a Southern city, and the other in New Orleans, La., which is, in fact, the Land-Grant College of Louisiana, doing the high-school work of the city. It thus appears that most of the South is doing nothing, or next to nothing, for industrial training in colored public high schools.

We next find in the United States Commissioner's report a list of ninety-two special schools, both public and private, for manual and industrial training in the South, of which a dozen or so are designated, or recognizable, as colored schools. Aside from the fact that, apparently, seven-eighths of these schools are for white and one-eighth for colored pupils, no fair comparisons can be made, because of the uncertainty and incompleteness of the data.

## THE LAND-GRANT COLLEGES

An opportunity for fair comparisons is found, however, in the Commissioner's report of the Agricultural and Mechanical Colleges for the two races. These are the so-called "Land-Grant Colleges," sustained in large part by funds received from the United States Government. There are reported to have been in attendance, last year, at the white colleges in the South, 10,529 students, and at the colored 1,772, or nearly six times as many at the white as at the colored. In strictly agricultural training the whites had 1,123 students and the colored 1,442, but of the latter more than half were in Hampton Institute and the Oklahoma College, leaving only 644 for the rest of the South. Can it be said that this represents the relative demand for industrial and agricultural education as between the two races? It certainly cannot, when we read in the Commissioner's report the statistics of the 135 Secondary and Higher Schools for the Colored Race, most of them private institutions. Among them are included fourteen of the colored Land-Grant colleges, whose statistics should, therefore, in making the comparison, be deducted. But, leaving these out, we find that the remaining 121 are giving industrial training to 19,102 colored students, or more than ten times as many as are receiving it in the Land-Grant colleges—indeed, nearly twice as many as the white Land-Grant colleges are giving it to white students. If, then, colored parents are willing to pay for the industrial education of their children in private institutions in ten cases out of eleven, it is clear that the Land-Grant colleges are not offering facilities for such education sufficient in quantity, or good enough in quality, to attract the attendance of colored students.

## DIVISION OF THE LAND-GRANT FUNDS

Let us now examine the financial support of the Land-Grant colleges on the part of the United States Government and the States themselves. The colleges were originally endowed by Congress in the Act of 1862 from the sale of public lands apportioned to the several States. It was

to be used for "the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes," and none of it could be used for land or buildings or for the management or disbursement of the funds—all of which must be paid for out of the treasuries of the States. When the original grant was increased by Congress in the Acts of 1890 and 1907—(\$25,000 a year to each State, now in process of increase to \$50,000 a year)—it was provided that this additional (and much larger) grant must be used, in each State, either in an institution which receives both white and black students, or else be given, "by a just and equitable division," to separate institutions for the two races. The plan for such "just and equitable division" was to be proposed and reported by the State Legislature to the Secretary of the Interior and, presumably, approved by him before he drew his warrant upon the Secretary of the Treasury for the payment of the money.

Let us now see how far this requirement has been met. According to the report of the Commissioner, there was paid last year, under the Acts of 1890 and 1907, to the white Land-Grant colleges in the South, the sum of \$433,483; and to the colored, \$161,517. This means that the colored people, with a third of the population, got only a little more than a quarter of the fund; while the white people, with two-thirds of the population, got nearly three-quarters of it. Taken by itself, this would not be so great an injustice, and might be excused, in part, by the present difference in the economic and educational advancement of the two races. But it cannot be considered by itself, for we have to remember that the original endowment of the Land-Grant colleges, under the Act of 1862, was, unfortunately, not guarded, as were the additions in the later acts, by a requirement for "a just and equitable division" of the fund between the two races in the South, though it would seem that a sense of justice and fair play would dictate such a division, even though not legally required. We learn, however, from the Commissioner's report, that of the original fund, under the Act of 1862, the white colleges received last year \$175,712, and the colored \$24,153—i. e., the whites received more than seven times as much as the colored. Even this small amount went to only four of the sixteen colored colleges—the other twelve receiving nothing whatever from this original fund.

## STATE SUPPORT OF THE LAND-GRANT COLLEGES

Nor is this all. For we must also bear in mind that the funds from the United States Government are in the nature of national aid to State institutions for whose general support the States themselves are chiefly responsible. What, then, are the States themselves doing for these colleges, when left entirely free to act without restriction from the General

Government? We are informed by the Commissioner that last year they appropriated to the white colleges for current expenses, \$1,190,917; and to the colored, \$259,950—i. e., nearly four and a half times as much for the white as for the colored. They also appropriated for buildings to the white colleges, \$548,966; and to the colored, \$94,941, or nearly six times as much to the white as to the colored.

## THE TRAINING OF TEACHERS

It remains for us now to enquire what is being done in the South in the way of normal work for the specific training of teachers for the public schools—a work of even greater importance than the industrial, because it concerns the intelligence of the entire mass of school children, regardless of their prospective careers, and is something on which the success of even their industrial or other special training must depend. It is amazing that its great relative importance is not more generally recognized.

The Commissioner of Education reports 193 public normal schools in the South, of which only fourteen are designated, or recognizable, as colored, and some of these are merely departments of the Land-Grant colleges already considered. But including them, the whites have nearly thirteen times as many public normal schools as the colored. In these schools, the whites have, in training courses for teachers, 17,508 students, and the blacks, 2,364, or the whites more than seven times as many as the colored.

The Commissioner also reports sixty-four private normal schools in the South. Of these, twenty-one are colored, with 2,312 students, and twenty-three are white, with 1,138 students. It thus appears that, when it comes to paying for normal instruction, colored parents are ready to support almost exactly the same number of private normal schools as the whites, and in these schools instruct, in teacher-training courses, more than twice as many students. Or, to put it differently, of all the normal students in both public and private normal schools, less than five per cent. of the white and nearly fifty per cent. of the colored are being trained in private normal schools.

Impressive as are the official figures already given, their real significance will be more clearly understood if we look at the concrete conditions in a few of the leading Southern cities, as learned from private sources, supplemented by some local school reports. I have in this way secured information from Petersburg, Va., Charleston, S. C., Savannah, Augusta, Athens, and Atlanta, Ga., Jacksonville, Fla., New Orleans, La., Chattanooga and Memphis, Tenn., and Jefferson City, Mo. Here are eleven cities that are fairly representative of the South.

In only five of these cities is there any high school work provided for Negroes. These are Petersburg, Athens, Jacksonville, Chattanooga, and Memphis. Only one of these has a separate high school building for Negroes, and that is Memphis. And even in Memphis, the colored high school building cost but \$9,000, while the white high school building cost \$150,000. (In the other four cities the high school instruction is given to a comparatively few Negroes in the grammar school buildings.) In Memphis, industrial training is provided for the high schools of both races, but the colored high school salaries range from \$65 to \$105 monthly, while the white salaries range from \$80 to \$200. My informant says that in Nashville, Tenn., more equal provision is made for the two races.

Let us now look more in detail at three Georgia cities. In Savannah there is one high school for the whites and none for the colored. The white high school has a fine new building with massive Ionic columns of Indiana limestone and carved figures in the front pediment, also of limestone. The walls and floors are sound proof. The heating and artificial ventilation are so arranged as to supply each pupil with thirty cubic feet of tempered and filtered air per minute, thus excluding street dust and disease germs. The building is wired for electric light, and at each teacher's desk is a telephone communicating with Superintendent's and Principal's offices and all parts of the building. These details are derived from the Superintendent's latest report, which also gives this further information: The whites have, besides this high school, nine elementary public schools to the Negroes' four; yet the time is not far distant, the report says, when the whites will need another school building. After stating this need, the Superintendent, a recent incumbent, presents the urgent need of more school room for the Negroes' children, for whom no enlargement has been made for several years, while their numbers have considerably increased, so that a new school would furnish an education for a large number of colored children who cannot now be admitted to the public schools at all. And yet there has been money enough in the city treasury for all the adornments and luxuries of the high school building for the whites.

Augusta, Ga., has a public high school for white girls and a private academy for white boys, soon to be taken over by the city, if negotiations which have been begun are successful. It has no high school work for Negroes, has abolished its eighth grade of grammar school work, and the abolition of the seventh grade also is recommended by the President of the Board of Education. It once had the "Ware High School" for Negroes, but abolished this many years ago. It has a training school

for white teachers, but none for colored. About 2,500 (or less than half) of the Negro children are in the city public schools, about 1,000 are taught in private institutions, and about 1,800 are in no school at all. To meet this situation, land for a new building has been bought in the heart of the Negro population, and the President of the Board proposes to erect the building as follows: He says, "The material from the old Fifth Ward White School could well be used in the erection of a new building there, and plans have already been made looking to a removal of this building and the conversion of it into a Negro school. . . . The expense of a new building need not be great, and the opportunity of securing it by using the old Fifth Ward school is before us. We can save money by using what we have." In another place the President says: "It is the correct policy of the Board to provide elementary education for as large a number of Negroes as possible, and leave them to pursue a higher education at their own expense, if they desire." The prospect, then, for a colored high school in Augusta, is not very bright.

Atlanta, with its two fine white high schools, one for boys and one for girls, and all of its secondary work for Negroes being carried on by private institutions, is chiefly interesting for the illustration it once gave of the value of the Negro ballot in promoting Negro education. In 1888 Col. Thomas Glenn ran for Mayor. This was when the colored vote in Atlanta, though not wholly free, was still of some account. Col. Glenn said to the Negroes: "Help to elect me and I will see that you have a new school house for your children." The Negroes helped to elect him, he kept his pledge, and the Grey Street School was built. That was twenty-two years ago, and since then no important public school has been erected for Negroes in Atlanta. Fifteen years ago an old four-roomed dwelling house was bought for a Negro school, two of these rooms being in the basement, and still in use, and this building has since been enlarged with four additional rooms. Four or five years ago, with the aid of the Negroes, the city bought the old Storrs School building from the American Missionary Association, as it was discontinuing its work in Atlanta. And within the last year, since Greater Atlanta has come into existence, four primary schools have been added. Less than half of the Negro children of school age are able to get any accommodations at all in the public schools of Atlanta, even though several of their schools have two separate sets of children in morning and afternoon sessions, taught by the same teachers. All of the buildings for Negroes are wooden save two, and most of them are old and unsanitary. Meantime the white children are comfortably provided for. And this slow, and reluctant, and wholly inadequate provision for Negro public education in Atlanta during the past score of

years, has been contemporaneous with the increasing limitation and suppression of the Negro's right to vote.

Such are the facts with regard to the provision made in the South to-day for the Secondary and Higher Education of the white and colored youth of that section. They are facts vouched for by the United States Commissioner of Education in his latest annual report, and by other competent authorities. There may be minor inaccuracies in the statistics; but they cover too large a field and too great a variety of details to admit of any doubt of their general accuracy in presenting a widespread and glaring inequality in the treatment of the two races in educational matters. Is it possible to believe that this inequality of treatment—this great injustice to the colored race (and consequent detriment to both races)—would exist if the exercise of the franchise were accorded to both races on perfectly equal terms? No sane man can believe it possible. The present condition exists not because white Southerners are by nature unjust, but because they have so far departed from a true conception of democracy as to believe that one entire race or class in a community can safely be entrusted with the exclusive right of deciding what another race or class in the community shall have in the way of educational or other opportunities. This is not putting too great a moral strain upon Southerners, merely,—it is putting too great a moral strain upon human nature.

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